

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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AT HER MERCY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "LOST SIR MASSINGHEED," "A PERFECT TREASURE," &c. &c.

CHAPTER XXXI. THE DRAINING OF THE CUP.

It was well for Mr. Hulet, in those days of trouble, that the details of the approaching sale at the cottage perforce occupied his thoughts. Happy for those whom a supreme sorrow oppresses, when they have no leisure to brood upon it; when want urges them to action; when helpless mouths, which look to them to be filled, cry aloud for bread. For once, Lazarus has then the better of Dives; for it is only the rich who can afford to indulge in the luxury of grief.

Even the removal to Lucullus Mansion, which he had left as a guest, and was now re-entering as a dependent, did not seem seriously to affect him. He was even more cheerful on that occasion than he had been for days. His last act on leaving the cottage had been a singular one; he had cleared his cupboard of all its potions and medicaments, and emptied them into the sea. Evy had ventured a remonstrance upon this proceeding, upon the ground that some of the medicines were very costly.

"That is true, my dear," said he. "But as I shall not be able to afford to lay in any new supplies, I may as well get out of my extravagant habits at once."

Actuated by the same motive, Mr. Hulet would have abandoned at his meals the use of wine, but for the manifest offence which his attempt to do so gave to the Barnbys, who loaded his private table with dainties both of food and drink. It was surprising to Evy that he gave way in this with such cheerful readiness, although she well perceived it was for her own sake that her uncle made it his study to

conform in all things to the wishes of their patrons. As for her own part, it would not have been a difficult one to fill, even if her employer had not made it easy for her, with all the tender delicacy of a woman's friendship. Whatever of work she had to do was accomplished in her own room; and it was there, whenever it was necessary to confer with Mrs. Barnby, that their conferences were held. If Evy's position at the Mansion was, as some of her own sex did not scruple to describe it, that of "a barmaid," she was a very glorified sort of a barmaid indeed. The chief drawback to it indeed was the opportunity it afforded persons to make ill-natured speeches which Evy did not hear, and which, if she had heard, so long as they referred to herself alone, she would have disregarded. Detraction would never have embarrassed her, as did the generous solicitude of her friends; but when after the sale of Mr. Hulet's effects she found their already well-furnished parlour crowded with knick-knacks that had once adorned their little drawing-room, all presents from good Mrs. Barnby, who had gone down to the cottage, note-book and pencil in hand, to "bid for bargains" professedly upon her own account; and when, as a climax, Evy's own pet piano was wheeled in, "with the kind regards of Mrs. General Storks," appended to the address, her heart was full indeed. Not the least welcome of their gifts was one which arrived with this characteristic note from Mr. De Coucy:—

"MY DEAR MISS EVY,—Lest I should run the risk of seeming to put you and your good uncle under an obligation, from which I know you both shrink as the sea anemone from the finger, let me inform

you that the total cost of this superficially magnificent present was exactly six-and-twenty shillings and sixpence. No larger sum did your respected ancestor, the executioner of his most sacred Majesty, Charles I., fetch from an indiscriminating public, frame and all. Yours ever faithfully,
T. DE COUCY."

This piece of salvage from the wreck of their household gods pleased Evy exceedingly upon her uncle's account, and indeed he received it in her presence with every show of satisfaction; yet, happening to look in upon him unexpectedly a few minutes afterwards, she found him with his head buried in his hand, and sobbing like a child. He did not observe her, and she withdrew with precipitation, but that unhappy spectacle was a revelation to her. The philosophic contentment which he had exhibited, was, it was now only too evident, assumed but for her sake. Her uncle was as wretched as herself; and how should it not be so? how could she have imagined it to be otherwise, since, like herself, he had lost his all? That "all," it was true, had different significations; but if she had lost her lover, had he not exchanged wealth and ease for a position the most sad conceivable—dependence upon the exertions of one whom it should have been his task to shield from the least breath of adversity and trouble? The reflection troubled her, yet strengthened her all the more in her resolve to fulfil her novel duties; a salary had been attached to them, small indeed, yet out of which in time it might be possible to save sufficient to enable them to live elsewhere, alone together, and away from scenes rendered painful by association or the sense of contrast; and in that meagre hope lay what remained to her of comfort.

Of old, when at Lucullus Mansion, it had appeared quite natural to Evy to have what she required for the asking, or even before it; to take no thought for the morrow, to welcome her pleasures, as they came, without surprise. But now she wondered at herself for having been so unconscious of prosperity and so unthankful for it. Her duties, as we have said, were light and by no means degrading or even distasteful. She had true-hearted friends, in whose conduct towards her could be discerned no change, save an increased kindness of manner—a more delicate solicitude to please and not to hurt; yet companionship with them had

lost its ease for them, its charm for her. Her life seemed to be cut off from theirs; and to have nothing in common with it. She had hitherto had no conception of the immense chasm which lies between the Rich and the Poor. She had pictured to herself, if any of her own acquaintances should suffer from loss of fortune, how she would in all relations with herself, at least, compel them to forget it. But she now perceived that that would have been impossible. She examined the matter with some interest, for her own sorrow was far too deep upon another account to permit this change to affect her very poignantly, and noticed with a melancholy surprise that so it was. Her friends had not withdrawn from her, nor was she conscious of having shrunk from them; there was an affectionate esteem on both sides, even stronger than before, and, on one side, a most heartfelt gratitude. But friendship, in the social acceptance of the term, had vanished altogether. With persons not her friends, and yet who perhaps desired to be so, Evy now began to open a new relation; for the first time in her life she learnt what it is to be patronised. Some of the female visitors at Lucullus Mansion having experienced considerable interest in the very lady-like and modest young person who seemed to assist Mrs. Barmby, but whose position in the establishment they could not exactly understand, they were good enough to express it. This was not very pleasant, but it was endurable, except where curiosity concerning "that sad affair of your poor aunt" mingled with their sympathies. The questions that some of these people put to Evy were wonderful in their impertinence. One good lady broke into Evy's sitting-room one morning, when Mr. Hulet happened to have gone out for a solitary walk, with the avowed purpose of cross-examining the poor girl, and "hearing the whole story of that inquest from beginning to end;" and she even gave her reasons for so doing. "I go about a good deal, my dear, and wish, for your own sakes, to have the true version of the affair as it really took place; people are so scandalous and so reckless in their assertions that I should like to feel myself in a position to give them a positive contradiction."

"A contradiction to what, may I ask, madam?" inquired Evy, with indignation in her eyes and voice.

"Nay, I can't state what, my dear Miss Carthew, for it wouldn't be good manners;

but they do say all kinds of things about your uncle—a most respectable old gentleman he looks, I'm sure, and apparently quite incapable of driving any one to drown herself, far less of mur—

"Pardon me, madam," broke in the steady tones of Mrs. Hodlin Barmby, who happened most opportunely to step in at that moment; "but this apartment is Miss Carthew's own. I believe you are one of our table d'hôte boarders, for whom accommodation is provided in the public reception rooms. May I beg you in future to confine yourself to them?"

Whereupon the enemy had gathered up her skirts and fled in panic.

"Oh, Mrs. Barmby," sobbed poor Evy, "is it true that people say—say what that dreadful woman hinted at about my uncle?"

"I don't know, I'm sure, my darling. What does it signify?" she answered, caressingly.

"Nay; but that is too terrible," returned Evy, with a shudder. "And fancy her coming here to ask of me, of all people——"

"My dear Evy, if you had kept a boarding-house as long as I have, you would be astonished at nothing that folks either say or do. If your uncle had been here instead of yourself, that woman would have doubtless directed her inquiries to him, and plumed herself upon going to the fountain-head in order to get at the rights of the story. But don't you mind her, my dear; don't you mind her, nor, as Mr. Paragon would say, 'the likes of her.'"

For herself, Evy strove "not to mind;" but the idea of such horrible scandals floating, as it were, in the very atmosphere of what was now their home, made her tremble for her uncle. Could nothing be done to remove him out of the reach of such evil tongues, and yet not separate him from her. Could they not live in town, for instance? Captain Heyton had taken up his residence there, it was true, and to meet him would have been agony indeed; but London was a large place. Could they not live there, and she go out as a daily governess and earn their bread? She knew something beside arithmetic; for she had been fond of study even at school, and had gone on educating herself in a small way since she had left it. Mr. De Coucy, who had lived so much abroad, had complimented her once upon her French accent. She had a good touch

on the piano. Could not these little gifts of hers be utilised? She would write to kind Mrs. Mellish, who had sent her such a sympathising letter upon her aunt's decease, and ask her advice upon the matter. The Rector's wife had a large acquaintance, and might know of some lady in want of such a person as herself to teach her little children for an hour or so daily.

If she once got a situation of that sort it might lead to others. It was indeed but a straw of hope, but then she had nothing but straws to cling to. At all events, she would write to Mrs. Mellish; and accordingly, without acquainting Mr. Hulet with her resolve, she did so. It would be easy enough to persuade him to leave Balcombe, since she had but to hint to him that her position at Lucullus Mansion was an unpleasant one.

It was only when the letter had gone, that the hopelessness of anything coming of her application struck her with full force. How difficult such a situation as she sought would be to get! How unfit she might herself be found for it! What wretched remuneration was paid for such services, and how great was the cost of living in London! Such reflections had often been uttered in her presence, when there had been nothing more interesting to talk about—and what she could remember of them was not encouraging.

No answer came from Dunwich, as indeed was to have been expected, since Evy had begged Mrs. Mellish not to write in case she had asked what was out of her power; and the days and weeks went slowly by. One day was the counterpart of its predecessor, and the burden of each was still the dread she entertained lest some such insolent intrusion as had happened to herself, some chance enquiry, or significant hint dropped in his presence, might cause that wound to rankle in her uncle's breast, which she was well convinced was far indeed from having healed. While thus observant and sensitive of all that took place upon her relative's account, she suddenly became conscious of a change in the behaviour of those about her as respected herself. There was no intermission in the little kindnesses which Mrs. Barmby and the widow were for ever doing her, but they ceased to seek her society; their words were as friendly as ever, but they grew few and far between, and when they met it was plain that both ladies felt under some embarrassment, which she was utterly

at a loss to understand. She was accustomed to the pitying glances of those visitors at the Mansion with whom she was occasionally brought into contact; but instead of this unwelcome compassion wearing out, as she had hoped it would do, it now appeared to increase. Was her uncle dying? was the idea that first occurred to her, and sent an icy thrill to her very heart. That he was ill, and weak, and wretched, she was well aware, but did these comparatively uninterested spectators see some change in him, which had escaped her accustomed eyes, and compassionate her beforehand upon the bereavement that was awaiting her? She dared not ask if this was so of any one of them, but she questioned her uncle cautiously upon his health, and received what, so far as that was concerned, was a satisfactory reply. Yet still her friends forbore to importune her, as heretofore, with their well-intentioned courtesies, or even company, and still the eyes of those less intimate rested on her for a moment, and then turned away as from one in grief too sacred for their intrusion.

To these latter, however, there was one exception, in the person of Mr. Paragon. This gentleman, who, since Evy's return to Lucullus Mansion, had respected her sorrow and fallen fortunes with a quite unlooked-for delicacy, declining, as it seemed, to press his society upon her, even so much as their previous acquaintance might have excused, now sought every opportunity to address her; ventured timidly to ask after her health and that of Mr. Hulet; and once even went so far as to place a pony carriage, which he had recently purchased—for what purpose not even the shrewd gossips of the Mansion could guess—at her uncle's disposal. To Evy all this seemed inexplicable, save on the supposition that this unhappy gentleman, who had been certainly most shamefully used, was perhaps paving the way to make inquiries about his lost love, of whom Evy had heard nothing since her departure. And, indeed, it was of Judith that he did speak to her, when an opportunity chanced to offer for a private conversation between them, which took place, as it happened, in the garden where she had once listened to the confidences of Judith herself.

"Dear Miss Carthew," said he, in a complaining voice, which he in vain endeavoured to render touching and pathetic, "I want to say something to you

that is to me of great importance, and yet so conscious am I of past weakness and shortcoming, that I hardly dare to do so."

"Pray say anything you wish, Mr. Paragon," answered Evy, with a smile of encouragement; "though I can scarcely hope to be of any service to you in the matter which, as I guess, you have in your mind."

"Oh, don't say that; oh, pray don't say that," answered Mr. Paragon, precipitately, "but only try and have patience to listen to me. You are not happy here, Miss Evy; it is impossible under the circumstances that you should be so; well, that is exactly my case. They say a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind; so I trust you will be kind to me."

Here he stopped, and gazed at Evy in the most imploring manner.

"If you and I were on the Morrumbidgee, in the free air of my native plains, I could address you easily enough," he continued; "but here, among these fashionable, heartless people—so different from yourself—I feel so flurried and put out; it is such a very delicate matter I want to talk about. Oh, Miss Evy, if you were only on the Morrumbidgee!"

"I think I know what it is that embarrasses you, Mr. Paragon," said Evy, who, notwithstanding her pity for this poor awkward gentleman, found it somewhat difficult to be serious. "You wish to speak to me of Judith Mercer."

"Yes, Miss Evy, that's right; give me a helping hand like that every now and then, and then I shall get on. Well, you know how that girl kept me off and on dangling on her hook, to be pulled up and landed, or put back in the river, just as it might seem most convenient to her, don't you?"

Evy bowed and looked as grave as she could. She did not venture to speak, nor indeed was there any need to do so, since Mr. Paragon had stated the case with perfect accuracy.

"And now only think of that little villain—vixen I should say, being in love with somebody else, Miss Evy, all the while!"

"I am afraid it was so, Mr. Paragon, though at the same time it did not appear to me that she gave you such very great encouragement."

"She made up for it, however, let me tell you," answered the other, peevishly, "when it did not appear to you, nor to anybody else. Encouragement, indeed! I'm not blushing on my own account, I do

assure you. Why, when we were alone together, she made nothing of calling me her Duck of Diamonds. What right has any girl to call a man a Duck of Diamonds, and then to leave him in the lurch like this?" and Mr. Paragon spread out his hands, and threw into his face the expression of one utterly deserted and forlorn.

"Her conduct would have hurt my feelings very much, Miss Evy—I might have been a blighted man—but for one thing:" here he dropped his voice to an earnest whisper, "and now comes the point of what I have to say to you: in my heart of hearts I never cared for Judith Mercer, for the simple reason that I was in love with somebody else."

"Then it seems to me, Mr. Paragon," observed Edith, drily, "that you were as much to blame as she."

"Not a bit of it," argued Mr. Paragon, naively; "for if she would have had me, she would never have known a word about it; while the person on whom I had set my affections seemed wholly out of my reach. You might say, indeed, that that was Judith's case also; but, then, I didn't plot and plan to marry the other, as she did, or behave treacherously to the person for whom I pretended the most affectionate friendship."

"I am quite unable to follow you in all this, Mr. Paragon," said Evy, wearily. "If I can help you in anything, tell me what it is. But sorrow is apt to make us selfish, and, to speak the honest truth, I have just now so many and serious troubles of my own that my attention is not easily won from them."

"That is only to be expected, Miss Evy. Yes, yes. Well, then, I will make my story as short as I can. Six months ago I came over from Australia with a pocketful of money and the intention of finding some honest English girl, who would be willing to share it as my wife. I found two such ones. No, no; I don't mean that. I found one who would have been the very thing: beautiful as an angel and as good; lady-like, accomplished—the adoration of all who had the happiness of her friendship; only the misfortune was that she was engaged to somebody else. I found another—let us call her No. 2—who was, also, not without attractions, and whom, upon the principle of half a loaf being better than no bread, I asked to become Mrs. Paragon. You know who No. 2 was. Dear Miss Evy, can you not guess who was and is No. 1?"

Now don't, pray, don't be angry" (for Evy had risen hastily from her seat with crimson face and angry eyes); "but listen to half a dozen words of reason. I knew that in thus addressing you I was risking what little regard you might entertain for me; but, indeed, I mean no affront. It is very close on what has happened, I own. You have had very much to trouble you of late; but, then, I have no time to lose. Another man might step in at any moment, while I kept silence out of delicacy, and rob me of the prize which I value highest in the whole lottery of life. That prize, dear Miss Evy, is your hand."

"I cannot listen to this, Mr. Paragon," replied Evy, firmly; "it is most distasteful to me. You observed, just now, that the person of whom you spoke was out of your reach. Without repeating those words in an offensive sense—that of being above you in any way, which is far enough, Heaven knows, from being the case—I must needs say that the mutual relation between us has by no means altered in that respect."

"Not altered!" exclaimed Mr. Paragon. "Not when the man who was to have been your husband is going to be married to another girl, and that girl—Judith Mercer!"

"It is false!" cried Evy, with vehemence, but with a sickness at her heart against which she strove in vain to struggle.

"Indeed, Miss Carthew, it is true. All the house here know it; the news came down from town ten days ago. I am a plain man, with no lord for my uncle; but I would scorn to act as Captain Heyton has done—he will suffer for it, however, that's one comfort; Judith will comb his hair for him—and I love you, dear Miss Evy, with all my heart, and I have five-and-twenty thousand pounds—Hi! Mrs. Barmby! Hi! help here! Mrs. Storks, water! water! Miss Carthew has fainted right away in the garden."

OLD FIGHTING SHIPS.

THE FORMIDABLE AND THE MARS.

ON an early day in December, 1781, Sir George Rodney, having an audience of George III., the king expressed much anxiety about the safety of the West India Islands, as reports had come that Count de Grasse, the French admiral, after a decisive battle with the British fleet, off the Chesapeake, and the surrender

of the army of Lord Cornwallis, had sailed with his whole fleet to the windward station. Rodney's patriotism was fired by this appeal, and he at once promised the king not to wait for the ships under repair, but to sail at once with the force then ready at Portsmouth. Driven into Torbay, however, and imprisoned there by contrary winds, Rodney eventually sailed with a squadron of twelve, and, in spite of tremendous gales, weathered Ushant on the 17th of January, 1782. While anchoring at the back of the Isle of Wight, he heard that Admiral Kempenfelt (who afterwards sank in the *Royal George*), with only twelve sail of the line, had attacked nineteen French sail, and cut off fifteen of the convoy, capturing one thousand and sixty soldiers and five hundred and forty-eight seamen.

Rodney's great desire was to reach the West Indies before Count de Grasse, and through storms, tempests, and contrary winds the admiral forced his way to Barbadoes in five weeks. He found, to his chagrin, that St. Christopher's had already surrendered, and that the Count de Grasse, fearing the junction between Sir Samuel Hood and Rodney, had moved off to Martinique with thirty-one sail of the line and ten frigates to face Rodney's thirty-six sail of the line. The French had on board their fleet five thousand four hundred soldiers, with a train of heavy cannon, intended for the reduction of Jamaica. De Grasse had no wish to fight, his object being to reach Hispaniola and join the sea and land forces of the Spaniards waiting near Cape François. Then, with fifty ships of the line and twenty thousand land troops, he hoped to sweep the English from the West Indies and annex all our sugar colonies. Rodney's whole aim, on the other hand, was to force his adversary's hand and tempt him to engage.

Early on the morning of the 8th of April, 1782, Captain Byron, of the *Andromache*, signalled, through a chain of frigates stationed between St. Lucia and Martinique, that the enemy's fleet was unmoored, and was starting to sea. Upon this signal the British fleet took up their anchors, and, in little more than two hours, were all under weigh, standing towards the enemy with all the sail they could crowd.

The chase was soon successful. The next morning the van and centre of the English fleet, including the flag-ship, the *Formidable*, had got within cannon-shot of the enemy's rear, and a sharp but in-

decisive cannonade ensued, from a great part of our fleet being becalmed under the high lands of Dominique. During the next two days the French, by dint of great exertions, kept far to windward, and might have made their escape had they not been brought down. On the 11th, Rodney saw a French ship which had run foul of its companion, and had, in consequence, dropped to leeward. On the 12th, Rodney, to his delight, reached a large part of the enemy's fleet, now reduced to thirty ships.

About half an hour before the engagement on the 12th, Lord Cranstoun, a volunteer post-captain, observed to Rodney that our fleet, steering the same course, close hauled, on the opposite tack to the enemy, must necessarily pierce and cut in two unequal pieces the French line in running along, and closing with it for action. This was the very scheme projected in 1780 by Rodney, when he broke through the French line in the action with *De Guiche*, but was not then supported by his other ships.

To plan and to act were the same thing with Rodney. The *Formidable* at once bore down on the enemy. Up went the signal for close action, and on rushed the *Formidable*, "tacking and returning the fire"—as Lieutenant-General Mundy (Rodney's biographer) says, with considerable spirit—"of one half the French force, under a general blaze and peal of thunder along both lines." In running this dreadful gauntlet the *Formidable*, in breaking through, passed within pistol shot of the *Glorieux*, a powerful French seventy-four, which was soon so cruelly mauled by Rodney's "merry men," that she lost all her masts, her bowsprit, and her ensign-staff; but, with the white flag of the Bourbons nailed to the stump of a mast, she still, like a dying dragon, breathed out fire and slaughter against her enemies, till gradually the voice of her cannon grew lower, and she paralyzed into a motionless hulk.

Sir Gilbert Blane, a friend and companion of Rodney, who was by his side all through this battle, says, that while breaking the line in passing the *Glorieux*, he saw the French cannoniers throwing away their sponges and handspikes, in order to leave their guns and hide below, while our men were cheering with the utmost animation.

The French officers fought with gallantry,

but the serfs they called sailors were not worthy of their country. The Captain of the *Glorieux*, the *Vicomte d'Escars*, of the house of *Fitz-James*, proved as remarkable for his chivalrous courage as for his rooted hatred to the English nation. He was killed during the battle, and our officers, on boarding the *Glorieux*, was shown the red stains on the gunwale where his body had been thrown overboard. Among the captured officers of the *Glorieux* were the *Viscomte de Betisy*, and two of the illustrious house of *St. Simon*.

It was especially observed by *Sir Gilbert Blane* and others, that in this battle, the closer the English ships fought, the less injury the enemy's shot effected, the French shot cutting clear holes in the ship sides, with orifices even less than their own diameter, and without producing splinters, whereas, the distant shot, whose momentum was nearly spent, shivered whole planks, made enormous chasms in the ships' sides and scattered innumerable splinters among the men on deck, or those working the lower guns. In the same way at *Navarino*, in 1827, the English had far fewer wounded than either the French or the Russians, their allies, who kept at a more respectful distance from the Turks.

Immediately after cutting the French line in two, *Sir George Rodney* made signal for the van to tack, and the fleet by doing so at once gained the wind of the enemy. The action lasted during all the rest of the day. Every ship in our fleet pelted and annoyed the enemy as it judged best. Down went the French colours one after another, as if obedient to some predestination. Though the victory was really over when the *Formidable* chopped its way through the French line, the heart of our fleet did not beat with its full pride and joy till the enemy's piece de resistance, the great *Ville de Paris*, struck her colours. This huge vessel of one hundred guns, larger than any first-rate England possessed, had been a present from the city of *Paris* to *Louis XV.* She was reported to have cost, in building and fitting out to sea, one hundred and seventy-six thousand pounds. She had suffered frightfully, having lost nearly three hundred men killed and wounded, for she was crowded with troops, making with sailors one thousand three hundred men. She bore the marks of innumerable English shot in her sides; her rigging was torn, and she had not a sail left or a mast capable of sustaining one. Unable to keep up with

the highflyers of her fleet, she stumbled into the very centre of *Rodney's* hungry wolf-hounds.

The *Glorieux* (seventy-four), when boarded, was a scene of butchery; so many Frenchmen had been killed that the survivors, from fear and hurry, had been unable to throw the bodies overboard, and the decks were covered with shattered and dying wretches. It is supposed that the French, in this great victory of ours, lost fourteen thousand men taken, killed, or put hors de combat. We captured in this hot and bloody fight the *Ville de Paris*, the *Glorieux*, the *Cæsar* (seventy-four), the *Hector* (seventy-four), the *Ardent* (forty-four), a ship previously taken from us by the French, afterwards re-christened the *Tiger*, the *Cato* (forty-four), the *Jason* (sixty-four), afterwards rechristened the *Argonaut*, the *Anille* (thirty-two), and the *Ceres* (eighteen), retaken. The *Cæsar* was destroyed by fire the night of the action; an English marine having let a candle drop among the spirit casks.

In this battle we lost three officers of reputation and rank—*Captain Bayne* of the *Alfred*, *Captain Blair* of the *Anson*, and *Lord Robert Manners*, *Captain* of the *Resolution*. This last-named officer, aged only twenty-four years, lost his leg, and was also wounded in the arm and breast. He died of lock-jaw on his voyage home. Of our vessels the *Formidable*, *Yarmouth*, *Monarch*, the *Duke*, and *Agamemnon*, suffered most, the *Duke* having thirteen killed and sixty-one wounded. Altogether we lost two hundred and thirty men, and had seven hundred and fifty-nine wounded. The captive French officers would not at first believe that the English return of killed and wounded was honestly made. *Sir Gilbert Blane* walked them round the decks of the *Formidable* and made them observe how little the rigging had suffered, the damage certainly not pointing to the loss of more than the fourteen men who really fell, and yet the *Formidable* suffered more than any vessel in the fleet, except the *Royal Oak* and the *Monarch*. They at first refused to believe our returns, and said we always gave the world a false version of our loss. They were gentlemen, however, and men of sense, and they soon began to appear visibly mortified to see how little the *Formidable* had suffered, though, at one time, every one of the thirty-three French sail of the line had attacked her in turn, and finally owned that our fire

must have been much better kept up and directed than their own, although they had on board their ships a corps of artillerymen expressly trained for sea fighting.

As for Count de Grasse, who was a man of honour, he allowed that his nation was a hundred years behind us, and was charmed with the strict discipline, neatness, and order of our English men-of-war. He, however, insisted on it that he should have taken Jamaica, at the close of 1781, had the French court kept their word to send him the twelve ships of the line they had promised. His officers, he said, had basely deserted him when he made the signal to them to rally, and even hailed them to stand firm by his side.

Rodney's sensible reasons for not pressing the pursuit that night were found among his papers after his death, and were afterwards published by his able biographer, Lieutenant-General Mundy.

"First, the length of the battle was such as to cripple the greatest part of the van and centre, and some ships of the rear, that to have pursued all night would have been highly improper, as the prisoners on board the prizes could not have been shifted, and those with the much-crippled ships of the British fleet might have been exposed to a recapture, as the night was extremely dark, and the enemy going off in a close connected body, might have defeated, by rotation, the ships that had come up with them, and thereby exposed the British fleet, after a victory, to a defeat. More especially as some of the British fleet were dispersed and at a very considerable distance from each other, and I had reason to conclude that they would have done more damage to each other than to the enemy during a night action, and considering the very great fatigue they had undergone during the battle of a whole day.

"If I had inconsiderately bore away in the night, and left the two ninety-gun ships, the Prince George and Duke, and several others greatly damaged, with the Ville de Paris and the captured ships, without shifting the prisoners, the enemy, who went off in a body of twenty-six ships of the line, might, by ordering two or three of their best sailing ships or frigates to have shown lights at times, and by changing their course, have induced the British fleet to have followed them, while the main of their fleet, by hiding their lights, might have hauled their wind, and have been far to windward before daylight, and inter-

cepted the captured ships, and the most crippled ships of the English; as likewise have had it in their power, while the British fleet had during the night gone so far to leeward, and thereby rendered themselves incapable of gaining their station to windward, to have anchored in their own ports, and from thence have conquered the British islands of Antigua, Barbadoes, and St. Lucia, while the British fleet must, from the damages they had received, have repaired to Jamaica, as the condition of all their masts would not have permitted their return to St. Lucia; though Jamaica might have been saved, the Windward Islands might have been lost."

Very soon after this great and crushing victory, Rodney was recalled by the new administration, which had yielded to party feeling. At Kingston, however, Rodney was received with rapture as the saviour of the British West Indies, and a thousand pounds was voted by the House of Assembly for a marble statue. As for De Grasse he was treated with respect and sympathy and received at St James's, his sword being returned to him by Sir Peter Parker. De Grasse was the first French commander-in-chief who had been brought prisoner to England since the Duke of Marlborough brought Marshal Tallard. The thanks of both Houses of Parliament were voted to Rodney for his brilliant and decisive victory over the French fleet in the West Indies, and Mr. Secretary Fox moved the Commons address. The hero was made a peer of Great Britain by the title of Baron Rodney, of Rodney Stoke, Somersetshire, and a perpetual annuity of two thousand pounds was annexed to the title. In 1806 a pension of one thousand pounds per annum was granted to his grandson for his life.

It was natural at first sight to attribute this victory to the numerical superiority of our ships; but it was computed by Sir Charles Douglas that the sum total of the weight of a broadside of the French fleet exceeded that of the British fleet by four thousand three hundred and ninety-six pounds; and although the number of our guns exceeded that of theirs by one hundred and fifty-six, their lower-deck batteries, in ships of seventy-four guns and upwards, consist of thirty-six pounders, which, according to the difference of the pound of the two nations, are equal to our forty-two pounders, and gave the enemy the above mentioned preponderance of metal on the whole amount.

The difference in the number of men was still more considerable; for besides that the French have a much greater complement of men to the same tonnage, they had the assistance of a large body of land forces. "Comte De Grasse," said Rodney, in a private letter to his family, "who is at this moment sitting in my stern gallery, tells me that he thought his fleet superior to mine, and does so still, though I had two more in number; and I am of this opinion, as his was composed of large ships, and ten of mine were only sixty-fours.

"The battle began at seven in the morning, and continued till sunset, nearly eleven hours; and by persons appointed to observe, there never was seven minutes respite during the engagement, which, I believe, was the severest that ever was fought at sea, and the most glorious for England. We have taken five, and sunk another. Among the prizes the *Ville de Paris*, and the French Admiral, grace our victory. He (the French Admiral) had sent me a message that he could not meet me in March, but that he certainly would attack us in April. He did not keep his promise, for I attacked him. In the first day's action, when the Formidable came abreast of the *Ville de Paris*, I ordered the main-topsail to be laid aback.

"De Grasse, who was about three miles to windward, did not accept the challenge, but kept his wind, and did not fire one shot the whole day.

"I hope this joyful news will raise the spirits at home, and I do not doubt but you will meet with a glorious reception at St James's. Do not forget to go. Adieu. I have had no sleep these four nights, and am at this moment looking out for their shattered fleet, though mine has suffered not a little. It is odd, but within two little years I have taken two Spanish, one French, and one Dutch Admiral. Providence does it all, or how should I escape the shot of thirty-three sail of the line, every one of which I believe attacked me? but the Formidable proved herself worthy of her name.

"John was not with me; he had sprung his bowsprit and was at Barbadoes. I am extremely sorry for it, for if he lives a hundred years he never may have such another opportunity."

In a subsequent letter, "I trust," said he, "the good people of England will now be pleased, and opposition hide her head. I own to you I think that the sort of

promise made to me will now be performed, and that I shall have a seat in the Upper House. It is the highest ambition a subject can aspire to, and the greatest honour to one's family. Oh! France, what joy does it give me to humble thy pride, and to lower thy haughty insolence!"

"It happened to me," says Mr. Cumberland, "to be present and sitting next to Admiral Rodney at table, when the thought seemed first to occur to him of breaking the French line by passing through it in the heat of action. It was at Lord George Germaine's house at Stoneland, after dinner, when, having asked a number of questions about manœuvring of columns, and the effect of charging with them in a line of infantry, he proceeded to arrange a parcel of cherry stones, which he had collected from the table, and forming them as two fleets, drawn up and opposed to each other, he at once arrested our attention, which had not been very generally engaged by his preparatory inquiries, by declaring he was determined so to pierce the enemy's line of battle (arranging his manœuvre at the same time on the table), if ever it was his fortune to bring them to action.

"I dare say this passed with some as mere rhapsody, and all seemed to regard it as a very perilous and doubtful experiment, but landmen's doubts and difficulties made no impression on the admiral, who, having seized the idea, held it fast, and, in his eager animated way, went on manœuvring his cherry stones, and throwing the enemy's representatives into such utter confusion, that already in possession of that victory in imagination, which in reality he lived to gain, he concluded his process by swearing he would lay the French admiral's flag at his sovereign's feet—a promise which he actually made His Majesty in his closet, and faithfully and gloriously performed.

"That he carried this projected manœuvre into operation, and that the effect of it was successfully decisive, all the world knows. My friend, Sir Charles Douglas, Captain of the Fleet, confessed to me, that he himself had been adverse to the experiment, and, in discussing it with the admiral, had stated his objections; to these he got no other answer but that his counsel was not called for; he required obedience only—he did not want advice.

"Sir Charles also told me, that whilst

this project was in operation (the battle then raging), his own attention being occupied by the gallant defence made by the *Glorieux* against the ships that were pouring their fire into her, upon his crying out, 'Behold, Sir George, the Greeks and Trojans contending for the body of Patroclus!' the admiral then pacing the deck in great agitation, finding the experiment of the manœuvre, which, in the instance of one ship, had unavoidably miscarried, peevishly exclaimed, 'D—n the Greeks and d—n the Trojans! I have other things to think of.' When, in a few minutes after, the supporting ship having led through the French line in a gallant style, turning with a smile of joy to Sir Charles Douglas, he cried out, 'Now, my dear friend, I am at the service of your Greeks and Trojans, and the whole of Homer's *Iliad*, or as much of it as you please; for the enemy is in confusion, and our victory is secure.'

Being not only a great sea officer, but a man of highly polished manners, Rodney had always youngmen of family who walked his quarter-deck. When his dinner was going aft, he has often, he says, seen the hungry mids cast over the dishes a wistful eye, with a watery mouth; upon seeing which, he has instantly ordered the whole of his dinner, save one dish, to be carried to the midshipmen's mess.

When a woman who had, contrary to the rules of the navy, secreted herself in her husband's cabin, and fought a quarter-deck gun in the room of her wounded husband, who was down in the cock-pit, was discovered, Lord Rodney severely reprimanded her for breach of orders, but gave her, immediately afterwards, ten guineas, for so valiantly sustaining the post of her wounded husband.

A little bantam cock which, in the action of the twelfth of April, perched himself upon the poop, and, at every broadside poured into the *Ville de Paris*, cheered the crew with his "shrill clarion," and clapped his wings, as if in approbation, was ordered by the admiral to be pampered and protected during life.

In the memorable engagement, Lord Robert Manners, son of the great Marquis of Granby, received so dangerous a wound that he died on his passage to England, in the twenty-fifth year of his age; he was a young officer of distinguished abilities, and universally lamented in the navy.

With one more story of English courage at sea, we close our series.

In 1798, the year of the battle of the Nile, while Lord Bridport and our Channel fleet were cruising off Brest, on the eager out-look for French ships, the admiral suddenly hoisted a signal for the *Mars* to chase a strange ship in shore of our fleet. The *Mars* was a fine seventy-four, with six hundred and eighty men aboard, and a capital antagonist for the French ship, which proved to be *L'Hercule*, a seventy-four, with a crew of seven hundred men. The *Hercule* tried very hard by every shift and artful wile to escape through the *Passage de Raz*, but the tide proved English in its sympathies, and the wind blowing east, she was obliged to anchor at the mouth of the *Race*. Captain Hood of the *Mars* was no lingerer about the skirts of enterprise, and went straight in at the embarrassed Frenchman, running the *Mars* so close to the *Hercules* as to unhang some of our lower deck ports. A bloody contest followed, which lasted for an hour and a half, when the enemy struck.

The prize was a valuable one. *L'Hercule* was a quite new and well-finished ship, and had sailed but a very short time before from *L'Orient* to join the Brest fleet. Her loss was dreadful; upwards of four hundred men were killed or wounded; and on the side where, from being at anchor, she was exposed to the fire of the *Mars*, her hull was burnt and almost torn to pieces.

The loss on board the *Mars* was trifling, if the mere number of men killed and wounded is taken into account; but heavy and lamentable indeed, from the circumstance that the gallant Captain Hood fell in this well-fought action. Just before it terminated, he received a wound in the thigh that proved mortal. He lived long enough, however, to be gratified by the news of the enemy's surrender, which he received with a smile, and expired as a Briton ought to die, whose life is devoted to his country, in the arms of that victory which had been won by his courage. He had previously called for pen, ink, and paper, and made a short will. Besides her captain, the *Mars* had seventeen men killed, sixty-five wounded, five of whom died of their wounds, and eight missing. It is probable that the last had fallen overboard during the heat and bustle of the engagement.

This, though a single action, was one of great importance. The meeting of two ships of the line is a circumstance of rare occurrence, and its decision in our favour a brilliant ornament to our naval history. The *Bellona* and *Courageux*, the *Fou-*

droyant and Pegasse, the Mars and Hercule, the Victorious and the Rivoli, will be recorded as the finest memorials of our naval prowess, and a decided proof of our superiority on the ocean.

Such were the deeds of our old sailors; nor will their descendants be slow to match them if occasion requires—though oak has now turned to iron, and iron has forgotten how to sink.

A DUMB POET.

On, to sing one mighty strain,
One prophetic burst of song,
Full of an immortal pain,
Deep, and tremulous, and strong;
Quivering with the bitter cry,
With the yearning agony,
Breaking forth for evermore
From men's wounded hearts and sore!
That should travel through the years,
Blend its music with the spheres,
Live for aye, and have its part
In the throbbings of the heart!

Even in the voiceless grave,
That sad grave to which I go,
Though the wintry winds should rave,
And the air be thick with snow;
Though the boughs should sigh above,
And the hearts of those I love
Be beginning to forget
Any lingering regret,
Should the music of that strain
Warm my frozen heart again.

But, ah me! it may not be—
Still the mocking music slips,
And the soul's deep melody
Dies in sobs upon the lips.
In the grim grave shall I lie,
With shut lips and sightless eye,
And the world will laugh to scorn
That sweet hymn that died unborn.

THE THREE CROWNS.

ONCE upon a time Bothnia was ruled by a mighty king, of the Finnish race, whose realm included not only the eastern, but the northern and western coasts of the Gulf. He had three daughters, whom he tenderly loved, and the magicians, with whom his kingdom abounded, were summoned to predict their future destiny. The unanimous reply was to the effect that something dreadful would happen, if the Princesses were allowed to go out into the open air for twenty years. They were therefore kept close in the castle, a garden covered with glass being laid out for their especial recreation. As they grew up they likewise grew melancholy, finding life monotonous, at which their father, considering that the youngest had attained the age of fifteen, did not at all wonder. So one day, being in an easy mood, he allowed them to take a stroll in his palace

garden, accompanied by his body-guard, under the command of his favourite giant, Koljumi. This precaution proved altogether useless. The Princesses roamed about at liberty for a little while, delighted with the fresh air, and charmed with every thing, till they chanced to climb up a moss-covered rock, which suddenly opened, swallowed them all three, and as suddenly shut again, to the great consternation of the guard. The giant alone retained his presence of mind, as he proved by briskly tearing the rock open, but the only result of this brilliant feat of strength was a fiery sword, which issued from the crevice he had made, and killed him on the spot.

The rest could only take home the bad tidings to the King, who, as might have been expected, sank into deep melancholy. He was somewhat cheered when three Heimdaller, or wise men, offered to set out in search of the Princesses. The offer was, of course, accepted, and the wise men were allowed to take with them as many servants as they pleased; but although they largely availed themselves of this permission, they distinctly refused the proffered services of Gylpho, a groom of the royal household.

A long time passed, and as the wise men did not return, the melancholy of the King returned. One day, observing that his royal master was even more sad than usual, a courtier named Dumb, who was deeply versed in Finnish lore, whereof the King was profoundly ignorant, offered to amuse him with a tale.

"Though" said the monarch, "we have a proverb, which tells us that he who mourns does not think of honey-cakes, and though thy story may possibly be dull, still thy offer is kindly, and we accept it with as much cheerfulness as we have at our command."

"I know, as our proverb has it, that a smith is not fitted for a schoolmaster, and that my skill as a narrator is small. As another proverb has it, no bird can fly higher than his wings can carry him. Nevertheless, I will do my best."

The King wiped his eyes and the courtier proceeded:—

"In ancient days, a certain man and woman were blessed with a very handsome son, who tended the king's flocks—"

"What king was that?" asked the Sovereign of Bothnia.

"The record is not precise on that head," answered Dumb; "he was pos-

sibly one of your ancestors, sire, possibly not. Where was I?"

"Tended the king's flocks," said the royal prompter.

"Also," proceeded Dumbr, "they had a daughter who was even more handsome, and who remained at home; but her brother, who was clever with his knife, cut out her portrait on the bark of a tree, and the king's son, who happened to pass that way, was so struck with its beauty, that he said to the artist with great dignity, 'If your sister is anything like that, all you have to do is to bring her to the palace. I will marry her, and you shall be the second man in the kingdom.'"

"And his father still living!" exclaimed the royal listener. "They had strange notions of matrimonial alliances in those times. Thanks to Ukko, we have advanced a little, at least in one respect."

"The brother told the good news to his sister, of course, expecting that she would be delighted," continued the courtier; "but, as you are doubtless aware, sire, young ladies have their tempers."

"And old ones, too," said the King. "As the proverb has it, he who argues with a woman should not have his tongue burned with hot groats."

"The perverse damsel," proceeded the courtier, "although her delight exactly corresponded to the expectations of her brother, declared that she would not cross the threshold of her house until a heap of stones that lay hard by was reduced to a powder fine as meal. The brother, inwardly chafing, did his best to arrive at the desired result; but with all his efforts, he could only break up the stones into little bits. The sister, therefore, put her own hands to the work; and, in a short time, the powder fine as meal was produced."

"As the proverb hath it," said the King, "sharp is the knife of the industrious, blunt that of the lazy. Now, of course, all was settled."

"Not at all," said Dumbr. "After imposing another task—on which I need not dwell—and which she herself performed, she vowed with her habitual perversity that she would not quit her home until she had worn out the threshold by crossing it backwards and forwards." This time the brother used his knife to some purpose, and secretly shaved away the wooden threshold. The sister was convinced, put on her best attire, and followed her brother, carrying under her arm

her pet dog Pilka. To reach the palace they had to cross the sea in a boat, which they both rowed."

"Or gulf," interposed the King.

"As you please, sire," said the courtier.

"When they had proceeded a short distance they came to a tongue of land, where they saw a horrible female fiend, Syoyatar, who begged to be admitted into their boat. By the advice of his sister, the brother refused to comply with this request; but he again encountered the fiend at a second and afterwards at a third point, and then, in spite of his sister's remonstrances, he took her into the boat."

"No doubt she spoke well," observed the King. "As the proverb has it, a good tongue is better than ten measures of corn."

"Maybe, sire," retorted Dumbr. "At all events, the act of courtesy was ill repaid, for Syoyatar, seating herself between the brother and the sister, began by making them both deaf to each other, while perfectly capable of hearing anything which she herself might say. Consequently, all the words uttered by the brother were misinterpreted; and when the foolish youth told his sister that they were close to the King's palace, and that she had better adjust her dress, the crafty Syoyatar explained that he enjoined her to divest herself of all her attire, poke out her own eyes, break her own arms, and leap into the sea. The poor girl executed the last of these supposed orders, without regarding the rest, and jumped into the waves accordingly."

"She was wiser than we had a right to expect," remarked the king. "As the proverb has it, we admire a bird for its song, a maiden for her good sense; and if my three poor girls had not had that foolish fancy for climbing up a rock——"

At this moment the conversation was cut short by a loud shout outside the palace. The three wise men had returned, having exhausted their stock of provisions; but they had not discovered the lost Princesses, so asked leave to seek for them a second time, which was readily granted, and they again refused the services of Gylpho, who wished to join them.

When they had departed, the King was deeply grieved, but not so deeply as when his loss was new, having grown somewhat used to his sorrow. Of his own accord, he sent for Dumbr, and, reminding him of the proverb, which says that joyless even-

ings are long, told him that he might as well continue his story.

The courtier took up the thread accordingly:—

"The unhappy girl, when she leaped into the sea, left all her fine clothes in the possession of Syoyatar."

"Was not the brother greatly shocked?" inquired the King.

"He was," replied Dumb, "but he was not so much grieved at the loss of his sister, as he was terrified to think that he would get into sad trouble by coming to the palace without the promised bride. Syoyatar readily solved the difficulty, observing that she was exceedingly like the lost girl, and dressed in her clothes, could easily be presented in her stead. The brother did not exactly perceive the resemblance to which she referred, but as there was no other expedient than the one recommended, he kept his opinion to himself. So Syoyatar put on the fine clothes, and they both proceeded together to the palace. The Prince, on whose memory the portrait of the lost girl was deeply impressed, perceived the dissimilarity which had been noticed by the brother, and asked him, somewhat sternly, if that lady was really his sister. That he had been cheated somehow, he saw plainly enough, but he thought that the imposture lay in the incorrectness of the portrait. He therefore honourably kept his word by marrying the supposed sister, and ordered the brother to be flung into a pit filled with snakes. The order was executed, but on the following morning, to the Prince's astonishment, the culprit was found alive. It was resolved, nevertheless, that he should remain where he was for another night.

In the meanwhile the lost sister was living in great luxury. The King of the Sea had built her a moveable glass palace, which kept out the water, and round which all sorts of mermaids, sea snakes and fishes, assembled to gaze at her with admiration."

"They must have been quick workmen under the sea," remarked the King.

"They were," assented the courtier. "The son of the sea-king fell in love with the fair stranger, and flung at her feet not only coral and pearls, and such like marine treasures, but gold and jewels of all sorts, obtained through a long series of shipwrecks. However, she sighed after her brother, of whose miserable condition she was informed by a very intelligent sea-snake, cousin to one of the land-snakes in

the pit, and embroidering a neckerchief of gold and silver thread, she asked permission to go on shore and present it to the Prince, which was granted, but only on the condition that she should wear round her a silver chain reaching to the bottom of the sea. It should be stated that the little dog, Pilka—"

"Ah, we had forgotten all about him," said the King.

Just at this point a shout, as before, announced the return of the three wise men, who, as before, came to announce a failure. But, during their absence, a change, unknown to anybody, had taken place in the fortune of the groom Gylpho. Greatly disgusted at the rejection of his services by the wise men, he had strayed into the nearest wood, with an axe in his hand, and vented his spite on a thick oak, at which he began to hack with all his might. An old man, of gigantic stature, immediately stood before him, laughed at him as a bungler, and told him, that if he would lend him his axe, he would teach him what wood-cutting was. Convinced that his new acquaintance was a spirit of some kind or other, but not being certain whether that kind was good or bad, the astute Gylpho, instead of parting with the axe, struck it as deep as he could into the oak, and pretending that he was not able to draw it out, begged the giant to assist him by widening the split. The good-humoured giant complied with the modest request, and Gylpho, suddenly withdrawing the axe, caused the closing tree to catch him and hold him fast by the fingers. In piteous tones he began to sue for deliverance, but Gylpho told him that he might remain where he was till the end of the world, if he didn't tell what had become of the three Princesses.

The required information was readily given. All the Princesses were in the power of Kammo, king of a certain rock. The eldest was confined in an iron room, situated a hundred fathoms beneath the base of the rock, wearing an iron crown on her head, and an iron ring on one of her fingers. The second was in a silver room fifty fathoms deeper, the third in a golden room a hundred fathoms deeper still, and both, like the eldest, wore crowns and rings corresponding to their respective apartments.

Gylpho was thankful for the information, but observed that it would be of small practical value, unless he was pro-

vided with the means of liberating the Princesses from their captivity.

"Release me," exclaimed the captive spirit, "and I'll let you have what you want, as sure as my name is Pellerwoinen."

Without a moment's hesitation, Gylpho widened the crevice with his axe and freed the giant; for Pellerwoinen was a spirit of exceedingly good repute. On this occasion he was as good as his word; for he produced a marvellous sword, a bottle of mineral water, a fife, and a thick rope, one hundred fathoms long. These things were to be used for the liberation of the Princesses; and, in the case of any extraordinary emergency, the fife was to be sounded.

Armed with these valuable tools, Gylpho hurried back to the palace, and made his appearance just when the three wise men had recounted their second failure. They had talked of their adventures by land and sea; described much that they had seen, and much that they had not seen; and gave no end of geographical information, more curious than accurate: but the Princesses had not been found. Gylpho, therefore, had hit the right moment when he asked leave to set out, unassisted, on the discovery of the lost darlings. Gloomily, but readily, the King granted his petition. Three professedly wise men had turned out to be fools; and if a man, who had no pretensions to wisdom, proved to be a fool likewise, the pain of disappointment in the latter case would be less acute than in the former.

When Gylpho had made his bow, the King relapsed into his habitual melancholy, and, reflecting on the quantity of obvious untruths told by the wise men, bethought himself of the proverb which teaches us that the guest discovers the faults of his host's daughters, and that travellers see wonders. After sulking for some days, he sent for the courtier, Dumb, and somewhat crossly said,—

"Get on with the story about the she-fiend and the sea-snake. I think we left off with something about a little dog."

"We did, sire," said the courtier, and spake as follows:—

"The little dog, Pilkka, disconsolate at the loss of his mistress, would not enter the palace, but preferred to remain on the beach, miserably running up and down, and eating nothing. When evening came, he merely refreshed himself with some

fresh water that flowed from a spring, and then went to sleep in the empty boat. Now, it happened that by the sea-side a remarkably shrewd widow lived in a small hut, in front of which was a stone bridge that reached the water. Close to this bridge one night came the palace of glass, borne by mermen and followed by a retinue of sea-snakes and mermaids, who sang merrily, while the links of the silver chain tinkled by way of accompaniment. The Princess crossed the bridge, sat down, and, seeing the little dog, gave him the kerchief, with the commission that he was privily to place it under the Prince's pillow and meet her on the same spot on the two following nights. The task was duly executed. The Prince, when he awoke in the morning, was surprised to find his new acquisition, and when his wife declared that she had embroidered the kerchief during the night while he was sleeping, he did not give the slightest credit to her assertion, though he kept his opinion to himself. He was again surprised, when, on causing inquiries to be made, he learned that the man among the snakes was still alive, nay, that the snakes seemed to be rather fond of him than otherwise. The punishment was very common, and no one had ever been known to live in the pit through as much as a single night. Yet now two had passed, and the criminal was as well as ever."

"Two!" cried the King, in amazement; "only two! In the name of Ukko, am I to believe that all that befel the lucky or unlucky girl, since she leaped into the sea, only occupied about a day and a half?"

"Precisely so, sire," was the response.

"Then I can only say that if there be any truth in the proverb, which tells us that he who gains time gains much, the prosperity of those times ought to have been enormous."

"Under such singular circumstances," continued Dumb, after a bow of reverential assent, "the Prince thought it expedient to visit the wise widow, who, on hearing the particulars of the case, said that his hideous wife was no other than the hateful fiend Syoyatar, and that the lady he ought to have married was in the sea, and had sent him the kerchief by way of inducing him to show mercy to her brother. The third night brought with it an embroidered shirt, sent by the same means as the kerchief, and the following morning a repetition of the same falsehood on the part of Syoyatar, a renewal of the

tidings that the man in the pit and the snakes were all happy and comfortable, and another visit to the sage widow on the part of the Prince, who now learned in further detail the manner in which the mysterious gifts reached him, and was moreover informed that on the coming night she would make her appearance for the last time, and that if she were allowed to return to the sea, she would be forced to marry the daughter of the water king. The Prince could only express his fervent hope that matters would not take such a dismal turn, and his desire to see the lovely stranger, and was counselled by his sage adviser to provide himself with an iron chain and a sickle of the same material, and following her directions, to act in the manner presently to be described."

"Short is the song of the wood-pigeon, as the proverb has it," interposed the king, "and I thank you for not telling the same thing twice over."

"When night approached," proceeded the courtier, "the Prince concealed himself behind a rock near the sea, and at the hour of midnight, a strange tinkling was heard, and a beautiful maiden arose from the waters, and calling the dog, intrusted him with the third gift. As she was about to depart, the Prince rushed from his place of concealment, broke the silver chain with his sickle, and cast the iron one round her. She endeavoured to escape; she turned herself into a lizard, a fly, a snake, a crow, and what not besides, but he destroyed the assumed forms one after another till she had resumed her own."

When the courtier had proceeded thus far, a shout of joy was heard, and, to the King's amazement and delight, the three wise men made their appearance, each leading by the hand one of the lost Princesses. The embracings and the tears of joy that ensued, we need not describe. The festivities that took place in honour of the happy event lasted several days, and the King was naturally too much occupied with his own happiness to think about the beautiful maiden of the sea.

To account for the joyous event that thus occurred we must go back a little in our voracious narrative. Gylpho, when he had received permission to seek the Princesses, had, according to appointment, gone to the wood on the night of the full moon, bearing his instruments, and with a sound of his fife, brought Pellerwoinen into his

presence. They went their way towards the enchanted rock, the spirit acting as guide, not perceiving that they were followed by three men, namely, the three bunglers who were falsely considered wise, and had kept Gylpho steadily in their eye from the moment when he had left the Palace. By means of the rope, Gylpho and his friend, when the rock was reached, let themselves down through a cavity to the iron-room, where they saw the youngest Princess with the crown and ring, as above described, guarded by the spirit of the rock, Kammo, a hideous monster, who had a horn on his head and an eye in the middle of his forehead, which had been greatly dimmed by age.* Gylpho lost no time in blinding him with a red-hot bar of iron, which happened to be close at hand, and then dispatched him with his sword. The liberation of the younger sister was easily followed by that of the others, who were confined to the lower rooms, and they all joyfully resolved to go home at once, Gylpho, by the advice of Pellerwoinen, breaking each of the rings into halves, one of which he kept for himself, while he gave the other half to the Princess who had worn it, and leaving all the three crowns behind. But when Pellerwoinen, who had taken his station outside, had succeeded in drawing up the three sisters, and was proceeding to draw up Gylpho, the three wise men came forth from their hiding-place, cut the rope, and Pellerwoinen fled in terror. The ladies, left in the power of the Heimdaller, were compelled to bind themselves by oath that they would never reveal what had happened; and thus, when they were brought to the Palace, the King had no reason to doubt that they had been rescued by the three sages, whom he regarded as his greatest benefactors.

In the meanwhile poor Gylpho lay for a long time senseless, and when at last he came to himself, he thought every bone in his body was broken. Bethinking himself of the bottle of mineral water, which, through a great mercy, had not been damaged by the fall, he swallowed its contents, and became as well and as strong as ever. His mind had previously been altogether upset, but now he remembered his fife, and taking it out of his pocket, summoned Pellerwoinen, who suggested that he should return to the upper world on the back of a raven. So much had his

* In the mythology of all the Finnish countries a figure like that of Polyphemus is of frequent occurrence.

weight been lessened by a long fast, that not the slightest objection could be made to this mode of travelling, and the journey was performed.

He did not think it prudent in the first instance to visit the palace, inasmuch as he had no friend and three deadly enemies. So he engaged himself as apprentice to a smith of great repute, who lived in the neighbourhood, and after he had remained some time in the smithy, his master was summoned to the palace. The youngest Princess desired to have an iron crown, exactly like that which she had worn during her captivity, and although she gave a sort of rough pattern of the required article, the order was obviously not easy to execute. The poor smith hammered away and produced something which did not at all fit, whereupon, though he was not at all surprised, he went to bed in a very ill humour. While he was asleep, Gylpho, sounding his fife, summoned Pellerwoinen, who at his request, flew off to the rock, and was back in a trice with the real crown, which, on the following morning, he presented to his master, pretending that he had made it during the night. The smith wished him to take it to the Princess himself, but he modestly refused; so his master proceeded to the castle, and was richly rewarded by the King, while the Princess declared that the new crown (as she deemed it) was even better than the one she had lost. Now it was the turn for the second Princess to desire an exact copy of her silver crown; and this was produced exactly in the same manner as the more humble diadem. The eldest princess, struck with admiration, now bethought herself of the golden crown, and told the smith that if his apprentice could make another after the same model she would reward him with her hand. By the operation already described, the golden crown was produced and taken to the palace, thanks to his friend Pellerwoinen, by Gylpho himself, who arrived at the palace in a golden coach, drawn by three mouse-coloured horses. He could not help smiling when the Princess declared that the new crown was better than the old one; but, taking advantage of his position, he proved that he was the real deliverer of the captives, by displaying the halves of the three rings, which exactly fitted the other halves in the possession of the three ladies.

The marriage of Gylpho with the eldest Princess was celebrated with great splen-

dour. Growing rather tired of the festivities, and reflecting on the wickedness of the wise men, the good King, calling the courtier Dumb aside, said to him—

"By the way, we never got quite to the end of that story about the brother and sister and the little dog."

"Oh, there is not much to be told, sire," said the courtier. "The Prince married the sister, and the brother was liberated——"

"Yes, yes—that of course," interrupted the King; "but what did they do to the she-fiend with the long name?"

"Oh," was the reply, "they persuaded her to walk upon a blue cloth, which concealed a pit filled with burning pitch, into which she fell and was at once consumed."

"Good!" exclaimed the King, "I was just thinking what ought to be done with those three scoundrels, whom we have so ridiculously looked upon as wise men. At all events, we will show that we are not so cruel as they were of old. We'll have no burning pitch—nothing of that kind! One of them shall walk a league in very tight wooden shoes; another shall ride a league on the back of a bristly boar—attired in very thin nether garments."

"And the third, sire?" asked the courtier.

"Well," said the King, after a pause, "we'll let him off altogether, and hope that he will profit by the example of the other two. We are taught by the proverb that a good child will himself bring the rod, and that a bad one is not to be cured by any rod whatever."

A CRY OF DISTRESS.

FRANCE is uttering a despondent wail, a groan apprehensive of future troubles, for reasons which few British heads of families would guess. She is lamenting not so much the millions transferred to German pockets as her own inadequate population. While every nation near her was obeying the law, "Increase and multiply," France has done the contrary.

But if her area remain insufficiently peopled, while all around are doubling or tripling their numbers, it is evident that France must, in the end, be invaded and overflowed, like an island sunk below the level of the sea, by in-rushing waves of foreign population. And even if there be no immigration of strangers, her neighbours, increasing in strength and wealth while

she remains at best at a standstill, will attain a sensible superiority.

Some French authorities account for the deficiency of population by the desertion of the villages by agricultural labourers, who resort to large towns and industrial centres. But that tendency exists elsewhere besides in France—in countries whose population is rapidly on the increase. It is part of our common human nature. Town is the rustic's forbidden fruit, his tree of knowledge of good and evil. The attraction of towns for the rural population (the present writer believes) is, to a vast number, irresistible. In its constancy and its universal spread, it acts like a social force of gravity. Moralists and philosophers preach, to neutralise its power, in vain. To many individuals, it is fate, destiny, a thing laid down in their horoscope. Go up to town they must, to seek their fortune, or their pleasure. Once there, would they quit it and go back to their deserted fields, Bow bells sing to them "Turn again, Whittington." But the craving of country for town not being confined to France, the causes of France's decreasing population must be sought elsewhere.

Some very able men have supposed at first that the fault lay in the race. But they were soon convinced that it could not be so, by the rapid and continuous increase of the French Canadian population; while, on the other hand, the native American population, of Anglo-Saxon origin, believed to be one of the most expansive of races, is actually diminishing.

True, the change from country to town is unfavourable to robust health and length of life. Impure air, confinement in workshops and factories, close and crowded lodgings, with the abuse of indulgences, will have their inevitable effects, which are visited on the next and after generations. The Conseils de Révision (for the personal examination of recruits) prove that the number of exemptions on account of weakness or defective stature is about two out of seven in agricultural districts, two out of five in certain industrial centres, and two out of four, and even more, in certain others. The result is not surprising; but it is still more easily accounted for, when we remember that War sends the finest and strongest men to take their chance at Glory's butchery, leaving the weaklings and the cripples to replenish France and supply a posterity.

The health and life of the working classes

in towns and industrial districts are also compromised by strikes, commercial crises, artificial wants, the dearth of provisions, but, above all, by misconduct and improvidence. The workmen who earn the highest wages seem to be those who save the least money. But this again is even truer, generally, of the English than of the French workmen; and yet the population of the United Kingdom is not, on that account, beginning to taper off.

Official sources give the state of the case. A report addressed, on the 31st of December, 1872, to the President of the Republic, by the Minister of the Interior, informs us that the population of the area which is now the actual territory of France, is less, by nearly four hundred thousand souls, than it was in 1866. The diminution is principally caused (independent of the war) by the cruel epidemics which raged in many departments in 1870 and '71, by a certain slackening of the number of marriages, and also by an excess of deaths above the births. At the beginning of the present century, more births occurred in a population of twenty-seven millions than resulted, in 1866, from thirty-six millions and a half of people.

In some few departments, however, the population has increased since 1866. One of these is the Pas-de-Calais. Nevertheless the Conseil-Général of the Department, in its anxiety respecting the national welfare, has requested one of its members, Doctor Gody, Mayor of Guines, a man of large and enlightened views, to draw up a report on the depopulation of the rural districts,* coupling it with another subject, of which, at first sight, it would appear to be completely independent. The Doctor, though aware of other causes of depopulation, confines his report to that produced by the emigration from agricultural districts into towns. We are not necessarily so restricted here.

Recent philosophers have endeavoured to show that, without the occurrence of any grand catastrophe, apparently slight causes, acting for long-continued periods, are sufficient to produce important geological changes, and even to bring about the utter extinction of whole genera and species of animals. The moral world has its resemblances to the physical world; and it is possible to trace, amongst our Gallic neighbours, destructive influences

* "La Depopulation des Campagnes et Les Enfants Assistés." Par M. le Docteur Gody. Arras. De Sede et Cie, 1873.

arising out of institutions, from which their founders expected no more than the establishment of a social and financial equality which experience proves to be a baseless dream.

Human nature likes to keep whole and undivided whatever it has got together by the sweat of its brow—be it the farm, the flock, the business, or the factory—and to leave it entire to its successor. French legislation, hating aristocratic fortunes, and insisting that property (without reference to its kind or quality) should be parcelled out, at the death of the proprietor, into exactly as many parcels as he leaves children (without reckoning the widow's share), pitchforks human nature out at the door. Nature returns by the window; thus:

A married couple have an only son. They look out for, and unfortunately have no difficulty in finding another married couple of their own rank with an only daughter. They marry the only son to the only daughter; and the estate or the shop, instead of being split into fractions, is not only kept from falling into ruins, but is buttressed up by the acquisition of other property. The young couple follow their parents' example, for they are acted upon by exactly the same motives. They, too, have an only son. They give him to wife an only daughter, who presents them with an only grandchild. The young ladies, or the young gentlemen, need not be only children absolutely and in literal fact, if they are so virtually and in the practical result—circumstances which their prudent parents will ascertain and calculate beforehand. Each of them may have a couple of sisters, one of whom becomes a Sister of Charity or a nun, while the other is in bad health, or not likely to marry; they are eventually only sons or only daughters, as far as the family inheritance goes.

This system reduces the population amongst the middle classes at a rate fearful to think of, though easy to calculate. Were it universal in France, the population, like a pyramid, would finish off in a point or a single individual—the last only child of the last couple of only children. Sometimes the will of a Higher Power removes the cherished only child. The parents, left childless, find their projects baffled, and the property, which was to remain unbroken, has to be distributed amongst cousins, nephews, or still more distant relatives.

Happily for France, there are married pairs who, having little or nothing to divide after death, and not troubling themselves into how many atoms that nothing is splintered by the law, have, and rear, families of four or five children, to the great bewilderment of their wealthy neighbours, and so, in some measure, make up for the deficit.

Let not the reader suppose that the above description is imaginary or exaggerated. The principle is always at work, even when not fully carried out. There are cliques and circles of respectable people in France, by whom the having a large family is looked down upon as, if not a legalised sort of immorality, at least as an imprudent eccentricity of parental weakness, more to be honoured in the breach than in the observance. If a married couple leave two children behind them, a boy and a girl, to take their places, they think they have behaved very handsomely to the State, if not actually deserved the thanks of their country. But no margin is left for the premature consumption of human life by accident, disease, or war, and that in a country which has not yet learnt the folly of aggressive war.

It is not asserted that, with "marriages de convenance," as the rule, there are no happy marriages in France; but it is certain both that there are many marriages in which happiness is not superabundant, and also that many marriages which might turn out happy are thereby prevented. Often the wife is quite as much her husband's commercial partner as his spouse. The Roman matron showed her sons as her greatest ornament. The French matron will show her cash-book and ledger; her lands, arable or pasture; her skilfully purchased shares in railways or loans; or her golden coins reposing without interest in stockings in the thatch or in pots in the cellar. She would consider a family of ten or twelve children a thing to blush for and conceal from the world.

But setting aside the inheritance question, the French laws and customs relating to marriage are singularly adverse to the spread of population. At no age, not even at threescore-and-ten, no matter whether bachelor or widower, if his parents (or only one of them) be alive, can a Frenchman marry without their consent. Up to twenty-five they have an absolute veto. After that age, in case of their refusal, he can send them, through a legal

and official channel, "respectful" stamped papers, which empower him, after a time, to act in opposition to their wishes.

It requires a very strong attachment to drive a young man or a young woman to this harsh measure—for single women sometimes employ it, as well as single men. Going to law with a parent is a repulsive idea, and is resorted to, mostly, with extreme unwillingness. But, besides the irritation and expense, it necessarily involves delay, during which may occur the proverbial slip between the cup and the lip, and the match be broken off by the objecting parties. No doubt many marriages that might be called imprudent are thus prevented; but the population—our immediate subject of consideration—is not thereby increased.

It is supposed that parents, in refusing consent to a marriage, are guided solely by their interest in their child's true welfare; but instances occur in which the only interest consulted is their own; where it suits their convenience to keep their child single—and even where they demand some sacrifice of money, or of responsibility (such as signing a lease or a bill), as the price of their consent.

French marriages are often openly and unblushingly interested, to a degree unknown in the United Kingdom, where a good and pretty girl, even if she be altogether portionless, need not despair of finding a husband. But, alas, for the portionless French girl, however good and pretty! The portion, not the girl, is too frequently looked at and estimated. Money-hunting beaux screen their moves behind the shelter of the law, and say, "It is not I who insist upon the dowry. My father refuses to let me get married, unless with a girl who has so much down." In the course of these venal negotiations, not a few marriages are broken off, by one party or the other, in disgust. They see that it is only a phase of horse or cattle dealing, and "they take their pigs to another market." But it is evident that—with reference to the matter in hand—the result cannot tend to increase the population. It rather accords with the poet's picture of wealth accumulating while men decay.

Many serious minds would gladly, were it possible, both reconsider the French laws of inheritance, and likewise relax, in some degree, the existing restrictions on marriage. But as that possibility seems deferred to an indefinite future, in conse-

quence of the self-interests of the vast majority of inheritors and the unwillingness of parents to yield the powers conferred by law, some statesmen accept the consequences as inevitable, sorrowfully believing, with the Baron Charles Dupin, that, although France is a brave and learned nation, that alone does not suffice to sustain her. If her population do not keep pace with the ascending progression of other countries, it is to be feared that she will eventually fall from the rank she once occupied amongst the nations. Others, more hopeful or more courageous, seek to remedy the evil, or at least to check its progress, by bestowing greater care and more effectual rearing on "assisted children."

Assisted children, in France, are those maintained by public or Government charity—foundlings, orphans, pauper illegitimates—who would otherwise fall victims to want, neglect, or infanticide. It is curious that the voids in a population which respectable and legitimate nurseries fail to fill, should have to be supplied from its uncultured growth, the offshoots of its wildings from desert spots. Place is thus provided for the children of the poor and the outcast to occupy, a hopeful opening made for those who otherwise had little hope. Two independent questions are brought into contact—the decrease of a nation's population, and the rearing and education of its infants who are absolutely or virtually orphans. National charity becomes one with national interest. Benevolence, by the simplest of consequences, leads to prosperity.

It was Christianity, Dr. Gody reminds us, which made of charity a virtue, and in the spirit of its Divine Founder, first originated schemes for succouring orphans and deserted children. Even in the nineteenth century, benevolent institutions for pauper infants exist only amongst peoples who follow the law of Christ. Other nations are nearly at the same point as when Moses was saved by Pharaoh's daughter.

In ancient Greece, it is true, the country adopted the children of warriors killed in battle; in Athens, they were presented to the people, in the theatre, at the feasts of Bacchus; but that was merely the price of blood, the payment of a debt, and not an institution of public charity for the maintenance of abandoned children. In Rome, where infants might be exposed and even killed, the infant became the absolute pro-

perty of the person who rescued him. Although, about the year 530, the Emperor Justinian forbade deserted children to be treated as slaves, the idea of taking charge of pauper deserted children from their birth, and providing them with a home, is an essentially Christian idea. In the eighth century, a Milanese priest, named Datheus, founded the first asylum for cast-off children, "where they might be brought up, taught a trade, and saved from servitude." In the eleventh century, a Hospital for Foundlings was erected at Montpellier.

Other isolated efforts, inspired by Christian charity, succeeded; but it was not till the end of Louis the Thirteenth's reign that the good work really became popular in France, through the exertions of Saint Vincent de Paul. Still it continued dependent on voluntary contributions, until Louis the Fourteenth, in 1670, by letters patent, adopted and definitely established that admirable project. The right of foundlings to assistance from public resources was thereby consecrated. Unhappily, sixty-six per cent. of these infants died before completing their first year.

In 1793, the Convention undertook to better the condition of foundling children; but it was the Empire that organised the institution on bases which still regulate, almost exclusively, the aid given them. Their number, in 1811, was sixty-nine thousand. It now amounts to one hundred and thirty-nine thousand, including all under twenty years of age; and the legion would be still more considerable, did not death thin its ranks in terrible proportions. In the Department of the Seine (Paris) the mortality of assisted children is fifty-two per cent. during their first year, and seventy-eight per cent. for the period of their first twelve years. The average, throughout France, is one-sixth for the first year and one-third up to fourteen years; but in a few departments the mortality reaches a figure which, having been disputed, we may be permitted to regard as incredible.

Doctor Gody glances at the means employed in England and in Russia for the maintenance of pauper orphans; but the grand question deliberated by himself and his colleagues is, where to place those who have survived their infancy, and whose age calls for some sort of education and requires a preparation for some definite line of life. Experience has proved that, in France, a great many assisted children,

both males and females, turn out badly. Legislators have striven to remedy this; but it is not for want of laws that the evil occurs. At the outset, a higher salary for and a severer choice of nurses, a stricter supervision and guardianship are called for, and would effect great good. Then, it is proposed to rescue orphans from death and from the demoralisation of towns by sending them into the country, where they will supply the hands so urgently demanded, and have a chance of remaining honest and hard-working agricultural labourers.

Doctor Gody's convictions evidently lead him to recommend a system already discussed in these pages.* The object is to make the child join the agricultural instead of the town population. He holds that the orphan, sent into the country to board and lodge with a small farmer or respectable farm-labourer, sharing the tasks and the hopes of his adopted family, will be inured to field-work, and will form a strong attachment to what may almost be called his native village.

Whether in town or country, we may believe that orphan children, after a certain age, are better dispersed amongst separate families, living with them on as nearly equal terms as possible, than collected together in "Orphelinats," "Asiles," Union Houses, District Schools, or other similar establishments. Consequently, the report concludes with a proposition to increase the monthly payments for the juvenile inmates, and to continue it up to fourteen years: also, at eighteen or twenty-one years of age, to give each foundling a complete trousseau or outfit.

It is desirable to record that French experience agrees with English, as to the superiority of the boarding-out system. But above all, the reader is requested to note the lament over the deficient population of France. It is a lesson for democratic and levelling reformers who would change our laws of inheritance and the existing power of bequeathing property, in the hope of bringing about great social equality. It is a consolation also to know that our redundant population is regarded with envy instead of with pity. Even pauper orphans are gladly economised in France; for what we are apt to consider an incumbrance and a superfluity, our neighbours are driven to look to as a resource.

* "Little Pauper Boarders." New Series, Vol. II., p. 301.

YOUNG MR. NIGHTINGALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "ROBSON'S CHOICE," ETC.

CHAPTER LXIII. THE DEAD PAST.

My amazement was extreme. The strange revelation came upon me like a blow. For the moment it fairly stunned me. I was speechless, almost senseless, with surprise. My first thought, when I could think at all, was that my uncle had gone mad. When I ventured to look at him—I could not immediately—in my feeling of stupefaction I had covered my eyes with my hands—he had turned away from me, and was leaning upon the window-sill, as though unwilling to witness my great trouble. He was much moved and distressed without doubt; but I could not question his perfect sanity. Next came the reflection, ludicrous in its incongruity just then—but yet not to be resisted—that I had unwittingly served a writ upon my own father! It was an unseemly recollection at such a moment; but my brain was in such a whirl, I was glad to make sure of any practical rational thought, however little importance it might in truth possess. We remained silent for some minutes.

"Sir George Nightingale is my father?" I demanded at length, in a gasping voice, that sounded strangely even to myself. I could not recognise it as my own. It was as the voice of some one I had never known.

"Yes!"

I had almost looked for his contradicting his former statement—for his assuring me that I had misunderstood him. The thing was still so incredible to me.

"You never suspected this?"

"Never."

"He breathed no word of it? Made no sign?"

"None."

"Yet, the opportunity was afforded him. Let him deny that, if he dare," said my uncle, with unusual warmth. "You bore from here a letter to him, which told him all. It was not written by my advice. It was written in spite of my advice. But your mother wished it to be: so you took the letter with you to London. You delivered it to him, the contents being unknown to you. It was thought right that you should know nothing of them. The result showed that we had judged correctly. You gave him the letter informing him

that you were his own only son—and he said—nothing!"

"He has been most kind to me," I said, pleadingly.

"Oh, he can be kind, most kind. Soft speeches and sweet smiles cost him nothing. Did he own you for his child? Did he take you to his heart as his son? Did he avow the wrongs done to the wife who loved him—the wife he abandoned and left to starve, or worse? Did he speak one word of penitence, of remorse; did he hint even at the sins he has committed, at the evil he has wrought! No! and you tell me of his kindness! I tell you that he was a liar and a coward and a villain from the beginning. He remains so still."

My uncle spoke vehemently, trembling with passion the while, and striking the table noisily with his clenched hand. Anger had lent him words—even eloquence. I had never before known him so greatly excited.

"And now it is for you to choose between your mother—what she has been to you all your life, you know, I need not surely remind you—and this scoundrel, who has been, as you say, so kind to you, that he shrinks from owning you as his son!"

"He is my father, you tell me. Please to recollect that. Do not speak of him in a way his son should not hear."

"What! I may not speak of him! What possesses you? Have you, too, become infatuated about this man? Has he so won you over by his false tongue and his glozing airs that you are blind to his real nature? that you are deaf to the truth about him?"

"He is my father."

"A father who ignores you, a father who scarcely knew of your existence, a father who, for long years and years, has troubled himself in no way concerning you, well content that you should starve so long as he was not plagued to buy bread for you!"

"He is my father. I am not his judge. Still less is it for me to punish him."

I scarcely knew what I said. Certainly I could not grasp the full significance of my uncle's words, of his charges against Sir George. Yet I felt that it was not to my ears that such severe censure of him should be addressed.

"Oh, you lay stress upon your duty as a son!" said my uncle, bitterly. "Pray, is that due less to your mother than to this man? Are the wrongs she has sustained at his hands nothing in your eyes?"

"Does she ask me to avenge them?"

"No!" cried a voice behind me. My mother had entered the room.

"Hugh," she said, gently but firmly, as she laid her hand upon his shoulder, "you promised to be calm."

"I hope to be so. I have tried to be so, Mildred," he said, after a pause. With an effort he regained something of his ordinary composure. "I will be more patient in the future. Forgive me, Duke, if I have expressed myself too warmly. I desired only to set before you, plainly as I might, a very painful story. I have been hurried into passion and violence. But that is over now. I'm calm again, as you see. Of your duty as a son it is for you to judge. But the mention of your father's name—the thought of it even—fires my heart strangely. It has done so any time this score of years past. May I never be brought face to face with him! The trial—the temptation would be too great for me. For your mother's wrongs, they are not to be avenged by you or by me. So she has willed it; or, do you think I would have waited all this time and struck no blow on her behalf? I have yielded to her wishes—her commands in this matter; and she has good warrant for her decision. Vengeance is not for us, though it's hard, very hard, sometimes, to sit down meekly with one's hands before one and do nothing when cruel injury has been inflicted upon us, or upon those dear to us. And, then, to find sin prosperous, and the sinner great—honoured—famous; the world bowing down before him! But I'll not revile him more. He is your father, as you say, Duke—and he's Mildred's husband. I'll not forget that, and I'll bridle my tongue. I'll tell what I have to tell—for it must be told now—as simply as may be. Give me your keys, Mildred."

She gave them to him. He opened her desk and took from it a little packet of papers. There fell from these, as he placed them on to the table before him, the oval miniature in its washed leathern case I had seen but once before, when I was quite a child. Again I held it in my hands and examined it. I could trace little likeness in it to Sir George.

"He has much changed since this was painted," I observed.

"Changed?" said my mother, faintly. "No wonder. Yet it was done by his own hand, years since, before our marriage. It was like him once. At least I thought so. But he did not do himself justice. He was

very handsome then. He is handsome still, no doubt, however changed. And he is not the only one who has changed." She spoke with half-closed eyes, pressing her hand upon her forehead.

My thoughts went back to the old time, when I had first found the miniature in my mother's desk, after seeing the large portrait of Lord Overbury at the Hall. Had the fact that both pictures were the work of the same hand, and betrayed something of the same method of art, blended and confused them in my mind, even in its then unskilled and immature condition?

I remembered that I had then blamed myself, for viewing my father's portrait with a certain apathy I found almost unaccountable. It was different now. He lived; I had seen him, and knew him.

"You told me he was dead, mother," I said gently to her.

"Was he not dead then to both of us? Is he not dead still, to me, at least?" She took my hand in hers and held it while my uncle told the story of the past.

I cannot repeat it precisely in his words. I was still too much confused and disturbed to gather much more than the purport of his discourse. While I remember well his attitude and manner as he spoke—the dignity with which he had suddenly become invested, and the unaccustomed fluency of his speech—yet his exact phrases have escaped me. Moreover it will be convenient to engraft upon his story certain particulars which it did not embrace, and which came to my knowledge at a later date.

The packet contained only the certificate of my mother's marriage, and a few faded-looking letters.

Concise stated, my uncle's story was to this effect:—

Hugh and Mildred Orme were the only children of old David Orme, of the Down Farm. Mildred had been christened after her aunt, her father's sister, an elderly maiden lady living at Bath, in fair circumstances, but whose property at her decease devolved upon David Orme. While on a visit to Miss Orme at Bath, Mildred, a girl of seventeen or so—high-spirited, and of remarkable beauty, had been sent to school to receive instruction in music and drawing, and other accomplishments. Miss Orme had desired that her niece should receive a rather more refined education than was usual with farmers' daughters at that period. David Orme had opposed

this step; but he had been overruled by his sister, who claimed a right to promote the education of her niece and god-daughter. At the school Mildred attended, she first met George Nightingale. He was there in the character of assistant to his father, the drawing-master of the establishment. Frequently the old man's failing health kept him from the school; at such times George would give the lessons in his father's stead.

Between the young drawing-master and his beautiful pupil an attachment sprung up. At least, he did not hesitate to avow his love for her, and he became possessed of her affections. It was said of him—for he was notoriously poor, and involved in debt—that he was tempted by a report that she was an heiress. She was known to be the daughter of a rich farmer, and it was believed that she would inherit the property of her aunt. That old Miss Orme's income would terminate with her life was not then generally understood. Still Mildred's prospects were of too modest a kind to be especially alluring to a fortune-hunter or a necessitous man. More probably he loved her truthfully for her beauty, and for herself. He formally proposed for her hand. David Orme would not hear of his suit, and ordered the discontinuance of Mildred's drawing-lessons. He addressed his sister on the subject in very peremptory terms, threatening to come to Bath to carry away his daughter. To the young man he wrote, it was admitted, most insultingly.

Then came a great scandal. Mildred escaped from her aunt's house, eloped with George Nightingale, and became his wife.

David Orme was furious. He never forgave his daughter. He commanded that she should not be mentioned again in his presence. He declared that his doors should be for ever closed against her. He struck her name out of the Family Bible, and made a new will, bequeathing all his property to his son Hugh. He died very soon afterwards, attributing his shortened life, and the sorrows of his closing days, to the ingratitude and misconduct of his daughter.

At this time Miss Orme was already dead. She had supplied such assistance as she could to the young couple. They were now left penniless—dependent only upon the exertions of young George Nightingale. These should have sufficed. His talents had been recognised; he had received much patronage and encourage-

ment. It was even said that he had been spoiled by the overpraise of Bath society.

But the marriage had not been a happy one. He was heard to avow that it had ruined him. It had entailed upon him cold looks and scandalous whisperings, and the loss of many friends. He had been so fêted as a bachelor. As a married man he was disregarded. He grew impatient, discontented, angry with himself, and with all about him. He repented his marriage. His creditors were threatening him.

Against his wife he could fairly bring no charge. Had she not suffered by her marriage not less than he had? But already his heart was cooling towards her. Poverty had stepped between them. It had not changed her love one whit—had intensified it rather—but it was destroying his. And then he was ambitious, self-seeking. His home had become miserable—unendurable to him. His indignation at what he held to be his unmerited misfortune, rankled and festered within him.

Still some friends remained to him—among them Lord Overbury and Lord and Lady Wycherley. When his child was born, Lord Overbury was sponsor to the infant, lending him his name of Marmaduke. His lordship was not very favourably regarded by the more refined society of Bath. A nobleman of sporting tastes, rude manners, reckless, extravagant, and it was said of somewhat vicious life. Still there was no very distinct accusation against him in those days; and he had certainly encouraged the young painter, rewarding him handsomely for his labours.

Lady Wycherley, too, had been kind to Mrs. Nightingale at a time when she much needed and greatly prized kindness. Her ladyship was a beauty then, with a husband much older than herself. She was light-hearted and somewhat light-headed; but her name was at this time free from the serious reproach her folly and sin brought upon it afterwards. My mother always spoke gently of the erring woman.

George Nightingale quitted Bath alone, suddenly, and secretly, to avoid arrest, it was said, and to seek fame and fortune in London. He had been furnished by Lord Overbury with a sufficient sum of money and with letters of introduction. His wife and child were to rejoin him at a future date, when he had been enabled to prepare for them something of a home in town. He left fifty pounds with his wife for her support meanwhile. After a week

or so he sent to her for twenty pounds of this fifty. She never heard from him again. She wrote to him repeatedly, but obtained no answer to her letters. She had never seen him since. His parting words had been most affectionate. His one letter from London was hurriedly written, but betrayed no lack of tenderness. Had he designed to abandon her for ever?

"He left her to the tender mercy of his friend, Lord Overbury," said my uncle, sternly. "There was a corrupt and infamous compact between them!"

His lordship had frequently seen Mildred Orme before her marriage. She was a daughter of one of the tenants upon the Overbury lands.

In Bath he had been the constant companion of her husband, his chief patron and friend. Something shocked by his uncouth bearing and speech, she had yet faith in his disinterestedness. With all his roughness, it seemed probable that he was really kind-hearted, generous, and honest. She was soon undeceived.

He persecuted her with the most shameful addresses.

She was almost friendless—her money was well nigh exhausted. Her alarm was extreme; but her courage did not desert her. Despair perhaps lent her strength. In an angry scene she braved and defied the villain, dismissing him from her presence. Then she fainted away, pressing to her heart her child, as though it had been a shield.

In proof of this dreadful passage in his narrative my uncle produced a letter addressed to her by Lord Overbury. It avowed his passion for her, his fixed determination to possess her. It pointed out that starvation was threatening both her and her child, and that her only hope of life and safety lay in her yielding to his suit. Moreover, it conveyed in the plainest terms that her husband had deserted her, wilfully, and with premeditation, conniving at his own shame and at her undoing. It was a brutal letter; horrible in its frankness.

With help from Lady Wycherley, carrying her child in her arms, Mrs. Nightingale fled from Bath, and took refuge with her brother, Hugh Orme. She had never since quitted the Down Farm. When her father had discarded her, scarcely less angry and indignant than he was, she had

vowed never to set foot in the old house again. Time had cancelled that rash pledge. David Orme was dead; her need and her trouble was most urgent; and Hugh would take no denial.

"I knew nothing of what was happening in Bath," he said, "or I should have been at her side to help her, long before. Be sure of that, Duke."

"I was proud, and I was punished," murmured my mother. "I wanted none to know of the misery that had followed upon my marriage. I wanted to endure alone. That could not be. I thank God for it now."

Poor Lady Wycherley suffered for her kindness to my mother. She drew upon herself the love of Lord Overbury.

What were the drugs, the charms, the conjuration, the mighty magic of this man? He had the repute of a successful lover—hideous, brutal as he was. But he possessed a certain force of character—an animal violence of disposition. He hurled himself against obstacles, and trampled them down. Thus, in many cases, he succeeded in attaining his ends.

Lady Wycherley fled with him, and subsequently, as the reader knows, became his wife. She wrote to inform my mother of her marriage—a strange, penitent, incoherent letter. Afterwards at intervals she wrote again—when she was separated from her husband—neither asking nor obtaining replies to her letters. It was as though she clung to the woman who had displayed a fortitude superior to her own.

In this wise only can I explain the distrust my mother had exhibited, when informed by Rosetta of her marriage with Lord Overbury. My mother was unconvinced that the real Lady Overbury did not still survive.

It was at this troubled period of my mother's life, as I gathered, that my uncle had first sought legal help from the late Mr. Monck. But whatever his advice had been, no action followed thereon. In this way, however, something of these early events had, no doubt, become known to Mr. Monck's clerk—Vickery.

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